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Josephine Mellen Ayer

A Memoir

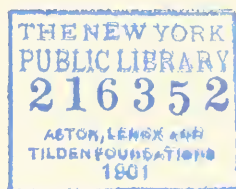
Let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness, and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest.

BROWNING.

The Knickerbocker Press
NEW YORK

1900

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W. C. C. C.
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W. C. C. C.

The following Memoir embraces a brief account of
the persecution to death of Mrs. Ayer's colonial Quaker
ancestors,

LAWRENCE AND CASSANDRA SOUTHWICK

Josephine Mellen Southwick-Ayer



MRS. Josephine Mellen Southwick-Ayer was born on December 15, 1827, in Medway, Massachusetts, and died on January 3, 1898, in Paris, France. Her life, for the most part, was cast in pleasant places. A believer in reincarnation would say that she enjoyed the fruits of self-denial practised and temptations conquered and good deeds done in a previous state of existence. But however befriended by fortune, to all life brings its trials, its duties, and its opportunities. The burdens laid upon her Mrs. Ayer endured with such patient courage and fortitude that few besides herself knew that her life was not always all sunshine; the obligations imposed upon her she discharged faithfully; her opportunities she improved, not alone for herself, but for others, so that it may

be truly said many found this world a better place to live in because she had lived in it. In filling the psalmist's allotted span of life, she was a dutiful and loving daughter, a helpful and devoted wife, a wise and tender mother, and at all times a loyal friend.

Her maiden name was Southwick. She was the daughter of Royal Southwick and Direxa Claflin. Her father was a Quaker, and all her ancestors in the male line for several generations back had been members of that gentle but heroic sect :

“ Nursed in the faith that Truth alone is strong
In the endurance which outwearies Wrong ;
With meek persistence baffling brutal force,
And trusting God against the universe.”

Royal Southwick was a direct descendant of Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick, martyrs in the cause of religious freedom in the days of colonial Massachusetts, who were persecuted and destroyed for being Quakers. Lawrence Southwick came from Lancashire, England, to America in 1627. He returned

to England and brought his wife Cassandra and two children to Massachusetts in 1630, on the *Mayflower*, in company with William Bradford, and settled at Salem, Massachusetts. James Savage, in his *Genealogical Dictionary of First Settlers of New England*, says: "In the dark days of delusion against the Quakers the whole family of Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick suffer much from fines and imprisonment." In Felt's *Annals of Salem* we find that on October 14, 1656, the Court of Assistants took into consideration the appearance of Friends in their jurisdiction. They charged them with claiming to be inspired, writing erroneous doctrines, and despising the orders of Church and State. They ordered that if any Friend came into Massachusetts he should be confined in a house of correction, severely whipped, be kept at hard work, and not suffered to speak. On October 14, 1657, the Court of Assistants enacted, that each male of the Friends, if returning after the law had been executed on him, should have one of his ears cut off; for

the second return he should have the other ear cut off ; each female so doing should be whipped ; if either sex came back a third time, they should have their tongues bored through with a hot iron.

From the *Massachusetts Colonial Records* we find that in 1656 Cassandra Southwick was arrested and fined for non-attendance at church. After this, she and her husband were excommunicated from the Church.

In 1657, Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick were committed to a Boston prison for having entertained two Quakers at their house. Lawrence was released, but Cassandra served a sentence of seven weeks' imprisonment for having a Quaker paper in her possession. In May, 1658, Lawrence, Cassandra, and their son Josiah were arrested, whipped, and imprisoned for twenty weeks at Boston for being absent from public worship and owning the Quaker doctrine. In October, 1658, they were again imprisoned, with others, in Ipswich, for the same offence, Cassandra being again whipped. According to the *Massachusetts*

Colonial Records, the Quakers imprisoned at Ipswich were sent for October 19, 1658. All six, including the three Southwicks, were "enjoynd at theire perrill to depart out of this jurisdiction before the first day of the Court of election next." They still remained; and on May 11, 1659, was passed the sentence of banishment: "It is ordered that Lawrence Southwick and Cassandra his wife, Samuel Shattocke, Nicholas Phelps, Joshua Buffum and Josiah Southwick hereby are sentenced, according to the order of the General Court in October last, to banishment, to depart out of this jurisdiction by the 8th of June next, on pain of death; and if any of them after the 8th of June next shall be found within this jurisdiction, they shall be apprehended by any constable or other officer, there to lie till the next Court of Assistants, when they shall be tried, and being found guilty of a breach of this law, shall be put to death." Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick went to Shelter Island, Long Island Sound, and soon died there, within three

days of each other, from privation and exposure ; his wife died three days after him.

Of Endicott and his minions Gough writes :
 “ The proceedings of these haughty rulers are strongly marked throughout with the features of self-importance, inhumanity, and bitter malignity ; but I know of no instance of more persevering malice and cruelty, than that wherewith they persecuted the aforesaid Lawrence and Cassandra Southwick and their family. Thus despoiled of their property, deprived of their liberty, driven into banishment, and in jeopardy of their lives, for no other crime than meeting apart and dissenting from the established worship, the sufferings of this inoffensive aged couple ended only with their lives ”
 (Gough's *History of the Quakers*).

Josiah Southwick, son of Lawrence and Cassandra, having returned from banishment, was again arrested, and ordered to be “ stripped from his girdle upwards, tied to a cart's tail and whipped ten stripes in each of the towns of Boston, Roxbury and Dedham.”

Daniel and Provided, a son and daughter

of Lawrence Southwick, were fined £10 for absence from church and for siding with the Quakers. Being unable to pay the fine, their parents' estates having been reduced by fines and distrains, they were ordered to be sold for bond-slaves, the county treasurers being empowered "to sell the said persons to any of the English nation at Virginia or Barbadoes, to answer the fines." But no ship-master could be induced to take them. It was from this son, Daniel, that Mrs. Ayer was directly descended.

Under the title of *Cassandra Southwick*, Whittier has described the sublime courage of Provided Southwick, which was born of faith that refused to yield to persecution and recant, and how she passed the night in prison before the day set for carrying out the diabolical sentence that had been passed upon her :

" All night I sat unsleeping, for I knew that on the
morrow

The ruler and the cruel priest would mock me in my
sorrow ;

Dragged to their place of market and bargained for
and sold,
Like a lamb before the shambles, like a heifer from
the fold !”

He tells what temptations beset her, alone
in her wretched cell, to purchase freedom by
renouncing what she had been taught was the
way of salvation, and how these gathered force
as she contemplated her future :

“ And what a fate awaits thee ! — a sadly toiling slave,
Dragging the slowly lengthening chain of bondage to
the grave !
Think of thy woman’s nature, subdued in hopeless
thrall,
The easy prey of any, the scoff and scorn of all ! ”

The poet describes how her faith finally
triumphed over the weakness of the flesh :

“ Bless the Lord for all his mercies ! — for the peace and
love I felt,
Like dew of Hermon’s holy hill, upon my spirit melt ;
When ‘ Get behind me, Satan ! ’ was the language of
my heart,
And I felt the evil tempter with all his doubts depart.

In the morning her prison doors were opened, and with the sheriff at her side and a wondering throng at her heels, she was marched down to the beach :

“ Then to the stout sea-captains the sheriff, turning,
said,—

‘ Which of ye, worthy seamen, will take this Quaker
maid ?

In the Isle of fair Barbadoes, or on Virginia’s shore,
You may hold her at a higher price than Indian girl or
Moor.’

“ Grim and silent stood the captains ; and when again he
cried,—

‘ Speak out, my worthy seamen ! ’ no voice, no sign
replied ;

But I felt a hard hand press my own, and kind words
met my ear, —

‘ God bless thee and preserve thee, my gentle girl and
dear ! ’

“ A weight seemed lifted from my heart, — a pitying
friend was nigh,

I felt it in his hard right hand, and saw it in his eye ;
And when again the sheriff spoke, that voice so kind
to me,

Growled back its stormy answer like the roaring of the
sea :

“ ‘ Pile my ship with bars of silver — pack with coins of
 Spanish gold,
 From keel piece up to deck plank, the roomage of her
 hold—
 By the living God who made me I would sooner in
 your bay
 Sink ship and crew and cargo, than bear this child
 away ! ’

“ ‘ Well answered, worthy captain, shame on their cruel
 laws ! ’
 Ran through the crowd in murmurs loud the people’s
 just applause.
 ‘ Like the herdsman of Tekoa, in Israel of old,
 Shall we see the poor and righteous again for silver
 sold ? ’ ”

So human nature, as it has often done, despite the doctrines of total depravity and original sin, proved its superiority to intolerant and fanatical theology, and Provided Southwick was saved from a fate worse than death.

In 1884, a monument was erected at Shelter Island to the memory of Nathaniel Sylvester, the proprietor who gave refuge to the Quakers. There are inscriptions on each face

of the monument ; that on the east end reads as follows :

“ LAWRENCE AND CASSANDRA SOUTHWICK,
Despoiled—Imprisoned—Starved—Whipped—Banished,
Who fled here to die.”

At the unveiling of the monument, a poem by Whittier was read :

“ Over the threshold of his pleasant home
Set in green clearings, passed the exiled Friend,
In simple trust, misdoubting not the end.
‘ Dear heart of mine ! ’ he said, ‘ the time has come
To trust the Lord for shelter.’ One long gaze
The good wife turned on each familiar thing —
The lowing kine, the orchard blossoming,
The open door that showed the hearthfire’s blaze —
And calmly answered, ‘ Yes, He will provide.’
Silent and low they crossed the homestead’s bound,
Lingering the longest by their child’s grave-mound.
‘ Move on, or stay — and hang ! ’ the sheriff cried.
They left behind them more than home or land,
And set sad faces to an alien strand.

“ So the gray Southwicks, from a rainy sea,
Saw far and near the loom of land, and gave
With feeble voices thanks for friendly ground
Whereon to rest their weary feet ; and found

A peaceful deathbed and a quiet grave,
Where, ocean-walled and wiser than his age,
The lord of shelter scorned the bigot's rage."

To such people who had the courage of their convictions, be the sacrifice what it might, the world to-day owes its release from an inconceivable barbarity of religious fanaticism, which had bidden fair to drag the world back to its darkest ages. Such Christian advocates as Endicott, once in power, have invariably sought to inculcate their message of peace and good will with the gallows and fagots in full sight. Nor have they been backward in applying the torch. Quakers were imprisoned, beaten, robbed, dragged through the streets, banished, and hung for presuming to entertain their own opinions and to worship their Maker in their own way. As for us who come after them to reap the harvest of their manful resistance, — we who breathe an air of freedom because they played the parts of men and women to the last resort; we who live to think and act for ourselves because they died, — let us not cease to shout

their pæans and rear their monuments, that the sweet memory of them may not perish from the earth.

For a more detailed account of the persecution and sufferings of the Southwicks see Sewel's *History of the Quakers*; Watson's *Life of George Fox*; Bishop's *New England Judged by the Spirit of the Lord*; Savage's *Genealogical Dictionary of First Settlers of New England*; Felt's *Annals of Salem*; *Massachusetts Colonial Records*; Gough's *History of the Quakers*; Whiting's *Truth and Innocence Defended*; *American Ancestry* (Joel Munsell's Sons, Albany, 1888, vol. iii.); *The Quaker Invasion of Massachusetts*, by Hallowell (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1887).

Royal Southwick was a worthy representative of heroic ancestors. He, too, was a Quaker with the courage of his convictions in religion and all other things. His inborn hatred of oppression and injustice and his love of liberty made him an outspoken Abolitionist in the days when speech of that sort was indulged in at the risk of a broken head. He entertained

William Lloyd Garrison at his home when politicians hurled anathemas at him and mobs pursued him. He made Frederick Douglass the recipient of his hospitality when association on terms of equality with a negro was regarded as evidence of depravity of the worst sort. And yet such was the high esteem in which his character was held in Lowell that he easily triumphed over the prejudices which these acts aroused. He served in the House of Representatives for several terms, was later elected to the State Senate, and for several years was chairman of the Whig City Committee.

A man is known by his friends. Royal Southwick enjoyed the friendship of Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and the Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier. One of his sons was named after Henry Clay. Royal Southwick resembled Webster in one striking particular. His head was of the same size, and for many years he and Webster wore hats made on the same block in Boston. Webster, it is well known, had one of the largest brains known to science.

Royal Southwick died in 1875, being then eighty years old, carrying with him to the grave the well-earned respect of all who had known him.

This Quaker ancestry is of interest because it supplied those characteristics which furnished the key-notes to Mrs. Ayer's character—gentleness and firmness. She was not a Quaker herself; her religion was too broad for sectarian limitations; but none the less was it deep and sincere, finding its chief expression in acts of kindness and charity and helpful counsel which made her presence as welcome as sunshine in many a household besides her own.

From her mother, Direxa Claflin, she inherited that common sense which is so very uncommon, and soundness of judgment that made her of great assistance to her husband in the conduct of his large business affairs. Direxa Claflin was a sister of Horace B. Claflin, that Bayard of the mercantile world, who successfully conducted the largest dry-goods business then in existence, while

maintaining the highest standard of integrity and honor. It was of him that Henry Ward Beecher said :

“He grew gentle and tender where men are apt to become suspicious and cynical. He had the power of discerning men. He saw the difference between prudence and honesty, and yet he never grew sour, but always, until the very end, he had charity for the infirmities of men.”

The house which he established, now known as the H. B. Claflin Company, still stands as a monument to his enterprise and sagacity, and many a gray-haired man recalls gratefully the helping hand which, when young, was extended to him by Horace B. Claflin.

In 1829, when Mrs. Ayer was still an infant, her father and mother moved to Lowell, Massachusetts, where they lived for many years. Much of Mrs. Ayer's girlhood was spent with Horace B. Claflin's mother — “Grandmother Claflin,” as she was called in the Ayer family. A most excellent woman she was, with the old-school notions of the limitations of woman's



sphere and the importance of household work as an essential of early training. Mrs. Ayer undoubtedly profited much by early association with this kindly woman, who, in her own life, furnished such excellent example of devotion to duty as she saw it. But let it be acknowledged that Mrs. Ayer never acquired "Grandmother Claflin's" high regard for household industry as a factor in woman's training and education. She never did believe that much washing of dishes was essential to the development of high ideals of feminine character.

In talking of her early life, in her own family circle, she used sometimes to tell how, when she was a mere child, she was once set to cleaning silver by "Grandmother Claflin," and in a burst of girlish petulance declared :

"Oh ! I just hate cleaning silver."

Whereupon "Grandmother Claflin," pained and shocked, remarked gravely :

"Little girls who hate cleaning silver should be made to clean it until they love to do it."

The little girl turned this observation over

in her mind for some time while still plying the chamois, and then, perceiving that it held out a ray of hope for escape from the task which she disliked so intensely, exclaimed with apparent glee :

“ Oh, Grandma, I just love cleaning silver ! ”

But “ Grandmother Claflin,” though a firm believer in instantaneous conversions in matters of faith, was sceptical about such sudden changes in ordinary matters of life, and the little girl’s announcement that her hatred of silver cleaning had been transformed into love for it did not bring her the reward she expected, an order to clean silver no more.

Mrs. Ayer had that kind of pride which prompts one to conceal one’s own hurts. Ever ready to bestow sympathy, she never sought it. Her own standard was that of the stoic. She scorned to yield to physical pain. In her younger days she suffered much from headaches of the severest type. She often went to a ball in those days with a splitting headache, but none ever suspected it, because with the gay she was always among the gayest.

Only her maid would discover it when on her return she would throw herself on her couch utterly exhausted, not by physical exertion or weakness, but by the effort to subdue the fiend that had been racking her brain. This self-neglect,—for such it was,—more or less persisted in through life, caused her much unnecessary suffering and illness, and no doubt resulted in very materially shortening her days. Only a few months before she died she acknowledged that it had been the great mistake of her life. Not knowingly, however, did she neglect herself. She was gifted with too sound a sense to run against her knowledge. But she was continually and unwittingly overestimating her strength. She lived to realize and admit that nature will not tolerate any slight, not even the smallest inattention, and never forgives or forgets an injury ; and that those who would lock arms with fate must first learn to make their bow and bend their knee to the iron-handed autocrat of health.

Yet hers was essentially a joyous nature. It proclaimed itself in her frequent laughter,

which was hearty, spontaneous, mirthful, and melodious withal. It was that winning, light-hearted laugh of hers that brought about the most important event of her life. At a little social gathering fate ordained that she should be the partner of James Cook Ayer in a game of whist, and that at a critical stage of the game she should trump his trick. He took a very serious view of whist in those days and chided her for her oversight. And she responded with a laugh, a laugh so frank and free and musical, and revealing such a well-spring of happiness within, that Mr. Ayer then and there, as he subsequently acknowledged, fell in love with her, and resolved to win her for his wife. He succeeded, for the guiding principle of his life, as he himself so aptly expressed it, was: "Undertake what you can accomplish, and accomplish what you undertake."

When one recalls what manner of man Mr. Ayer was, it is not to be wondered at that that gleeful, girlish laugh fell upon his ears like rain upon a long-parched land, and caused

the flower of the divine passion to take instant root within him. His early life had been a struggle of the grimmest, sternest sort. There had been very little play in it. At eleven years of age he set to work attending a picker in a woollen factory at four cents an hour; and to increase his earnings often worked twenty hours out of the twenty-four, for in those days there was no benignant child-labor law. There are some men, Galton tells us in his work on hereditary genius, who are bound to amount to something, despite all the obstacles that may be put in their path. Of this irrepressible type was James Cook Ayer. That which would have crushed utterly boys far above the average in intelligence and ambition simply acted as a stimulus upon his indomitable spirit and boundless energies. He refused absolutely to yield to circumstances. Every opportunity that came his way he made the most of. And thus he obtained an education and became a classical scholar of the first attainments. He learned to read and write the Portuguese language after he was fifty. When

he was twenty-one he invented a rotary steam-engine. Numerous other later inventions attested his mechanical versatility. He studied medicine. He became an expert chemist. He made himself acquainted with all the latest discoveries of science. He organized and managed a vast business. He took a hand in politics. He was a master of the intricacies of finance. He built railroads, canals, and cotton mills. He founded the town of Ayer. But up to the time that he met the charming young lady who was to become his wife, he had gone through life like a soldier, fighting for everything that he gained. It had been one long battle with only here and there the briefest sort of a furlough. So when he heard that laugh it revealed to him a nature that had thriven on, and enjoyed to the full, what he had so keenly missed in his own life. He recognized the true complement of himself.

They were married on November 14, 1850. He was then thirty-two years old and had already laid, strongly and substantially, the

foundations of his fortune. She lacked a month of being twenty-three years old. The union was in every way a happy one. In Mrs. Ayer he found, as he himself wrote nearly a quarter of a century after their marriage, "that great, best gift of God to man—a good wife." But not only in the sphere of his home did she prove herself truly a helpmeet. In his business enterprises he found her judgment invaluable. It is his own testimony that after their marriage he never made an investment, nor engaged in a new enterprise, nor reached a decision in any critical matter affecting his business, without first consulting her; and to no course would he commit himself without her approval. So great was his confidence in her judgment, that he made her one of the executors and trustees of his will. From a man of the ordinary range of activities testimony of this sort would not mean much; but when one recalls the extent of Mr. Ayer's business ramifications and the success which he achieved, it becomes very significant.

To that intuitive knowledge of human nature which, in company with many other good women, Mrs. Ayer possessed to a remarkable degree, she added the results of minute powers of observation, and thus acquired a capacity for "reading people" of which her husband often availed himself. He used to say that he never knew her to be mistaken in her estimate of persons whom she had met. She took great delight in the study of character, and some of her deductions, from seemingly trivial and inconsequential actions, would have delighted a Sherlock Holmes.

Once, when driving down Fifth Avenue with one of her sons, when a jam in the thoroughfare compelled very slow progress, she called his attention to a woman who was walking on the sidewalk a little ahead of the carriage, and going in the same direction, with the observation: "There goes a woman it would not be safe to trust."

"Why, how do you know that?" asked her son. "Have you ever seen her before?"

"No," Mrs. Ayer replied, "I never set eyes

on her before ; but women who walk like she does are never to be trusted."

Then she directed her son's attention to a peculiarity in the woman's gait that had entirely escaped his observation, and treated him to a highly entertaining dissertation on character as indicated by gait in walking, with illustrations drawn from life, which showed that she had devoted to the subject much original thought and study.

After his marriage, Mr. Ayer took a house in Gorham Street, Lowell. There were born their two sons, Frederick Fanning and Henry Southwick, who survive them. Soon after this Mr. Ayer purchased the historic "Stone House," or "Stone Tavern," as it was sometimes called, on the right bank of the Merrimac River and within sound of Pawtucket Falls. It was built on the site of the wigwam of the celebrated Indian chief Wanalancet, who did not wait until his death to become a "good Indian," but embraced Christianity and proved himself a friend of the white man. Here Mr. and Mrs. Ayer lived for some

twenty-seven years and dispensed a generous hospitality, which, added to sprightly wit and intellectual conversation, made their home one of the social centres of Lowell. Not a few celebrities here found entertainment and refreshment, the most renowned of whom was Daniel Webster.

Mrs. Ayer was a tactful, graceful, and gracious hostess, and thereby added much to her husband's popularity. She was an adept at the art of "drawing people out" and pleasing them by making them well pleased with themselves. But she never allowed any social functions to interfere with her full performance of those higher duties which held the first claim on her, nor to divert a moment of her time and devotion from her first thought, which was always her children. To them she gave all the watchfulness of her waking and her sleeping hours. Early in life she was obliged to adopt the customary afternoon nap as a temporary respite from the labors of the day. Unwilling to trust her children with a nurse while she herself was sleeping, she would invariably lock

them all in the room with her and see them safely to sleep, before venturing herself into the strange region of forgetfulness. With the ample means which Mr. Ayer's growing fortune enabled him to place at her disposal, she found opportunity to cultivate those tastes which, next to her family, were her chief source of delight. She adorned her home with beautiful pictures and choice works of art, and showed a rare and wonderful taste in their selection and arrangement. She had an instinctive and keen sense of harmony in color, which is much rarer than the sense of harmony in music, and which enabled her to give to her home that artistic atmosphere which wealth without culture can never simulate.

She was, however, passionately fond of music, and loved to share her appreciation of it with her friends. She gave many musicales and sought for them the best talent obtainable. But music of any sort gave her pleasure, and she was too frank and independent to seek to disguise the fact for the purpose of assuming superiority of taste. She liked the best, but

that did not make her indifferent to the second, third, or fourth best.

To the "tender charm of poetry" she was keenly sensitive. The poets were the favorite companions of her leisure hours. She had an unusually retentive memory, and the treasures that were thus gathered in her mental storehouse she loved to bring forth for the pleasure of her friends. She made no pretensions to elocutionary art, but she read and recited well, because she had the feeling and sympathy which enabled her to understand and interpret with natural grace the best utterances of the master singers of the English tongue.

For artificiality of any sort she had a strong aversion, particularly that form of it commonly called "putting on airs." It was impossible for her to be otherwise than her natural self at all times and in all places, but her depth of insight and breadth of character gave her great powers of adaptability, and thus she could make herself "at home" with persons of widely divergent tastes and attainments.

Blessed days for her were those spent in the

“old Stone House.” There was born her only daughter, who survives her, Mrs. Lesley Josephine Pearson, widow of the late Commander Frederick Pearson, of the United States Navy. There she met and faithfully discharged the added cares and responsibilities that were thrust upon her as she developed from young womanhood to matronhood, without any loss of that kindliness of heart and gracious sweetness of manner that had characterized her when she first entered the old home as a bride. There she extended the helping hand and open purse to many who sought her in sorrow, poverty, and affliction. There fell upon her the first great shadow of her life—the loss of a favorite brother, Edward F. Southwick, who died in August, 1855, before he had reached the age of eighteen. His loss to her was most keenly felt; and, aside from the natural occasion for grief, she had every reason for taking it greatly to heart. Let me pause for a moment, to drop a flower upon his grave. He was a lad of uncommon promise. He seemed to have had united in

him all the great qualities of his Southwick ancestors. His character was an unusual one, distinguished by a certain marked superiority of unworldliness coupled with an exalted nobleness of thought and aspiration, which placed him at once in the bright galaxy of lofty souls. His whole nature was markedly spiritual. He seemed not so much to mingle with the world as to hover above it. "His soul was like a star, and dwelt apart." He seemed to be sufficient unto himself. Mature with a wisdom beyond his years, he was welcomed as oracular in the presence of his elders. He was calm with that "high seriousness" of Matthew Arnold, which seemed strange and awe-inspiring in one so young. There was an unspeakable charm about him which seemed to be the blossom of great manliness with exalted ideals, united to a wondrous gentleness of mind and manner. The lesser gifts of intellect — talents which adorn, but never make a man — nature had showered upon him. No one who ever saw him could ever forget him. Strange that one so rare and so keenly needed,

should be hurried from the world almost before he had had time to speak. Such spirits appear to dip their wings for an instant only in a wave of the cold rough waters, and then to rise again towards the star-sown domes from whence they sprang. Who knows but that Plautus gave us the true explanation: "Whom the gods love die young"?

Twenty-three years after there fell upon her the second great shadow of her life, the loss of her husband, who died July 3, 1878. They were made for each other, and were devoted to each other; and as they climbed the hillside together, the skies scattered more than the allotted share of roses across their path. But the night cometh; and it was her night; and none could know the deep darkness of it when his star had set.

But, notwithstanding these great sorrows, life for her still held its duties, and her children claimed her care and guidance. She believed in the "strenuous life"; in gathering up "the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." Not a moment was thrown aside. To be of

service, that was her motto—to be of the utmost usefulness in her power, and in her way. She worshipped the beautiful. No matter what form it took, or where it appeared, there she could be found, a never-failing pilgrim, kneeling at its shrine. It was her master passion : To discover it, create it, purchase it, display it, and see it capture others in its net ; see it come forth in new forms to make new converts — bringing the greatest number under its greatest spell—that was her delight. She was a born artist. With the right training in the beginning of life, she would have become an artist of the first distinction. She had the creative faculty to evolve beauty from her own ideals, and to stamp it upon others. I know of no spaces in the firmament of beauty she did not cultivate. To her, everything seemed to have its beautiful side, even as to Victor Hugo the slimy waters of the sewer reflected the stars.

To do right, that was her religion. “Do what is right, and you will accomplish what you wish” ; those were her words, oft repeated. And how faithfully she followed

them! With her the conscience had to approve to the uttermost. No avoidance of what appeared to her to be a duty. Like her Quaker ancestors, she was not shackled by any doctrines or creeds. To do right,—that was enough,—to do right under all circumstances and without fear. Her fearlessness and courage were most marked. And, with it all, she was most gentle. In all respects, and in the largest degree, she was a gentlewoman. She had the gentleness of a pigeon, with the fixed purpose and straight determination of an eagle. Utterly unsordid, she faced what she believed to be right without a dawn of hesitation ; for in her make-up she knew no fear.

Soon after her husband's death she moved to New York, and made her home at No. 5 West Fifty-seventh street. Here in due time her life resumed its wonted course. The old "Stone House" with its hallowed memories she transformed into a home for young women and children, and by her will bequeathed \$100,000 for its endowment and support. Her new

home she again stocked with treasures of art selected with her usual consummate taste, and in it she entertained her friends in the same delightful fashion that had characterized her hospitality at Lowell.

After she took up her residence in New York, she was in the habit of going to Europe every spring, returning in the fall. She went to Europe, as usual, in 1889, but was destined never to return. An accident changed the tenor of her life. An incident preceded it which is worth mentioning, because of the interest it may possess for students of the occult.

She was staying at the Continental Hotel in Paris with her friend, Lady Clark. It was about the end of October, and she had made all preparations for her return voyage to America, and had engaged passage on one of the French line steamers that was to sail in a few days. Lady Clark told her that there was a clairvoyant staying at the hotel, and suggested that they call her in and see what could be got out of her. Regarding it merely as a diversion,

Mrs. Ayer acquiesced. The clairvoyant was summoned, and after some questioning as to the peculiar powers to which she laid claim, announced her willingness to submit them to a test.

She appeared to go into a species of trance, and then Mrs. Ayer asked her what kind of a voyage she was going to have on the steamer in which she expected to return to America. After a pause of a minute or so, the clairvoyant answered :

“I have been all over the steamer, but I do not see you on board of her.”

“You must be mistaken about that,” said Mrs. Ayer, laughing, “for I have already engaged passage on her, and am all ready to go on board.”

“You will not sail on her,” declared the prophetess who professed her ability to see into the future with closed eyes.

Mrs. Ayer laughed again sceptically, but asked no more questions on that point. After some further probing in other directions without eliciting anything definite, the clairvoyant

volunteered the information : "You are going to meet with a serious accident."

This gruesome prediction, which might have caused a woman of less strong nerves some uneasiness, produced no effect whatever on Mrs. Ayer, and the woman was dismissed after receiving her fee.

Next day she went out for a drive with Lady Clark. After the carriage had gone some distance, Mrs. Ayer, who had been advised to take active exercise by her physician, left it for a short walk, her friend remaining in the carriage to await her return. She had gone only a little way and was about to cross a street, when a cab dashed around the corner and knocked her down. The driver, as is usual in such cases, without stopping to see what injury he had done, whipped up his horses and disappeared. The wheels had passed over both arms, breaking the right elbow and the left wrist. Of course the pain which she suffered was intense. But after some spectators had assisted her to her feet, she walked unaided to the carriage in which

she had left her friend, and, taking her seat therein, directed the driver to return to the hotel. More intent on sparing her companion alarm than on the consequences of what had happened to herself, she said nothing about the accident on the ride back to the hotel; and with such stoical fortitude did she control her sufferings that her friend entertained not the remotest suspicion of what had befallen her. Only after she had reached her own apartments in the hotel did she relax the vise like grip in which she had held her feelings under subjection; and, throwing herself on a couch, directed her maid to summon a doctor at once.

The physician perceived immediately the serious nature of her injuries. He told her that he would have to set the broken bones in plaster casts, and, as a matter of course, proposed that she take some anæsthetic to render herself insensible to the pain of the operation. But this stout-hearted woman of more than sixty years, with the blood of Quaker ancestors in her veins and the recollection of

their valorous submission to suffering and persecution for conscience' sake, would have none of it. She could endure pain as well as they. She merely wanted the operation done as speedily as possible.

After the bones had been set, the doctor told her that he could see no escape from the bed for her for six weeks, as dressing with both arms in plaster casts would be impossible, as a matter of course. But she had another surprise in store for him. She announced her intention of giving a musicale to her friends in two weeks. She did not propose to be shut out from the world for six weeks by such trivial matters as broken bones. Next day she summoned a dressmaker and ordered a dress made with the sleeves cut open from wrist to shoulder, so that they could be wrapped over the arms and be laced up without in any way disturbing the arms in their plaster casts. The dress was made, the invitations to a musicale were issued, and the programme was carried out in her apartments on the date specified, just two weeks after she had been run over by

the cab, to the mingled gratification and astonishment of her friends.

But the accident caused her to abandon the idea of returning to America that winter. When she was able to be about again, she leased a house in Paris, No. 19 in the Rue de Constantine. But so pleasant did her stay in Paris prove, so many congenial friends did she make there, so many new interests in life were opened to her, that she stayed on year after year—never to return. It involved no sacrifice of old ties. Her children went over frequently from America to visit her, and her friends in this country enjoyed her hospitality whenever they crossed the ocean. And thus, with a mind ever alert to receive new impressions, the “footfalls of the years” lighted so softly upon her as scarcely to leave a print that was perceptible.

The house in the Rue Constantine, adorned with rare collections of works of art, became the resort of the best people of Paris; not people of society only,—though society took its turn,—but artists, the creators of the beautiful,

were her favorites. She never lost an opportunity of helping a struggling artist to get on. She founded a resort in Paris for the shelter and assistance of poor American artists who came there to complete their studies. Her house became a salon where her friends could partake of what was best and noblest in the inspirations of the first masters of art. Her literary and musical entertainments, marked by the same exquisite taste that presided over everything she did, were eagerly sought and widely attended by lovers of the Muses, and quickly became a distinguished feature of the French capital, where she gathered about her a host of friends, who were left to mourn the loss of their gentle hostess.

Her taste was faultless. But it was more than that. It was more than capacity to appreciate and understand. It was the constant expression of a deeper attribute—the power to create and develop ideals of beauty, which she was continually doing in one field or another, and which pointed the unmistakable genius within her. Genius she possessed of an

unusual order,—the faculty to divine new forms of beauty wholly hers,—and she never imitated and seldom adopted the ideals of others. Genius to evolve and taste to adapt were both hers. She delighted to see her taste upheld and appreciated by others; for, as Sir Joshua Reynolds put it, “taste depends upon those finer emotions which make the organization of the soul.” It was with a view of emphasizing these emotions, in order to become the better understood, that she gathered about her as many appreciative friends as would meet her on the common ground of taste to understand and willingness to promote the flowering of every shrub that could be planted in the field of art. For society as such she cared little or nothing. For the growth and prosperity of her pet cause, namely, the incorporation of the beautiful and artistic into everyday life, she cared everything. One woman could scarcely do more to demonstrate and popularize artistic beauty as the starlight and the moonlight beating their way through the fog and smirch of the dreary spaces. Her

social entertainments bore the same stamp of gentle refinement. No skill was wanting to put her guests on a footing of complete enjoyment, which was her happiness ; so that in London, Paris, and Rome, where she was thoroughly well known and appreciated, she was warmly welcomed as the favorite and unrivalled hostess of the hour.

Through it all ran the thread of her artistic nature—her overmastering faith in the supremacy of beauty wherever she could see it or hear it ; but, above all, where she could bring it into existence by the touch of her magic wand. She had Dante's intense "faith in the ultimate union of perfect beauty and perfect holiness." She believed in the "doom of the ignoble" and the ultimate triumph over all things of the "power that makes for righteousness." Take her for all she accomplished and for all she was,—her fidelity to lofty ideals, her force of character, her strength of will and fearless courage, her large-heartedness and her extreme gentleness withal,—and she is destined to be long

remembered for one of the most remarkable women of her time.

Her life was a singularly fortunate one; and yet, it might be truly said, nothing in it so moved her friends to envy as her manner of leaving it. She literally fell asleep in this world and awoke in the next. No wasting disease, no pain, no mental decay, no heart-breaking good-byes preceded the summons of the Angel of Death.

It was her habit to read in bed every night after retiring. On Sunday night, January 2, 1898, she retired earlier than usual. She read until about eleven o'clock, when she asked for a cup of tea. A little after twelve she called her maid to remove the lamp, and composed herself for the night. The morrow found her still sleeping, long after her wonted waking hour, and in the same position her maid had left her the night before. She had not moved; she had not opened her eyes nor parted her lips. Not a moment's suffering, not an instant of consciousness had intervened; leaving an expression of utter rest and peace that made

her face sweet to look upon. And so she
passed away to a better world, truly

“Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.”

A few only of the many kindly expressions of the Press are added, showing the general regard in which Mrs. Ayer was held; while the great depth of her love and the tireless tenderness of its devotion could only be known to her immediate family and her nearest friends.

A correspondent, writing to the *New York Tribune* over the subscription of "A Lifelong Friend," says of her :

"To the Editor of the 'Tribune.'

"SIR :—

"I wish you would permit me to say a few words about Mrs. Josephine M. Ayer, who died in Paris on Monday. Probably no one knew this estimable woman better than I. She was a gentlewoman, descended from an heroic stock of New England Quakers. She inherited their peculiar gentleness and sweetness of character, with all of the steadfastness of purpose and allowance for the shortcomings of the world that go to make a noble woman. In these days of haste and anxiety too much thought is bestowed upon what people do ; too little upon what they are. Emerson says : 'To be is to act.' How little is thought of that ! Much as Mrs. Ayer did for her friends, it was what she was that endeared her to them. There was an indefinable charm about

her, the influence of which no one who ever met her could escape. Although a considerable part of her time was devoted to matters of society, it was with the desire to contribute to the happiness of others, and not because she was at heart, or in any sense, a society woman. She liked to see others happy. She would exert herself to no end of trouble and expense for this purpose. How often I have seen her force herself to be present at some little entertainment she had prepared, when she looked pale and worn, simply 'because she did not want to disappoint her friends.'

"In the fall of 1889, while driving with Lady Clark in Paris, she got out of the carriage to take her accustomed walk. Upon turning a corner she was knocked down and run over by a cab, and both her arms were broken. She got to her feet with some assistance, mounted her carriage, making light of the incident to her companion, drove back to the Continental Hotel, where she was staying, and, bidding her companion good-day, took the elevator and went to her room alone, and

not even the elevator boy noticed that anything had happened to her, so perfectly did she conceal her suffering. She sent for her physician, who was obliged to set the bones without the administration of ether or any anæsthetic, which she refused to take, and bore the operation with scarcely a moan. She had all the pluck and determination of her Quaker ancestors.

“ Her charities were well placed and very generous. Kindliness and gentleness were the characteristics most noticeable to those who knew her well ; and they were many, and were dear to her, and she to them, and they will remember her, and miss her, and mourn her loss more and more as time passes away ; for she was unique in her characteristics and possessed the faculty of impressing herself in the hearts of her friends, never to be forgotten.

“ A LIFELONG FRIEND.

“ NEW YORK, Jan. 7, 1898.”

“ Mrs. Ayer was ever ready to aid the

struggling American artists and singers who went to Paris to study. Her purse and her sympathy were never appealed to in vain, and often she sought those whom she believed to be worthy. She was a liberal patron of art.” —(*Philadelphia Press*.)

“ Mrs. Ayer lived in Lowell until the death of her husband in 1878. She then came to New York, and for a number of years occupied the house No. 5 West 57th Street, but since 1889 she has been living in Paris, where she occupied a distinguished social position, being welcomed in the most exclusive homes of the old French families, to which but few Americans gain entrance. Mrs. Ayer was a lover and generous patron of art and music. Her social and musical entertainments became well known throughout the French capital, and her private and public charities were most liberal at home and abroad. She founded the Ayer Home for young women and children in Lowell.” —(*Home Journal*, New York.)

The Paris correspondent of the *New York Times* writes :

“In American society the New Year's festivities have been overclouded by the sudden death of Mrs. Ayer, which took place two days ago, after an illness of about a fortnight's duration. She lived in the Rue Constantine, and became greatly beloved by all classes of society. Her portrait, by Carolus Duran, exhibited at the Champs de Mars Salon three years ago, was the pictorial sensation of the year. Her musical soirées were very largely attended. She was most charitable, and her loss will be greatly felt not only by the artists and men of letters whom she patronized, but by the poor, to whom she was a Lady Bountiful of tireless generosity.”

The Pennsylvania Hospital, of Philadelphia, to which Mrs. Ayer bequeathed the sum of fifty thousand dollars by her will, have very generously erected one of their handsomest buildings to her memory, to be used as a clinical laboratory for the study of all sorts of germs and

germ diseases, for the general advancement of the science of bacteriology. The building is inscribed,

**Erected
To the Memory of
Josephine M. Ayer.**

“ Mrs. Ayer was a lover and generous patron of art and music. In Paris her social and musical entertainments became well known throughout the French capital. Mrs. Ayer’s private and public charities have been most liberal at home and abroad. That which interested her most was the Ayer Home, which she founded for young women and children in Lowell.” (*New York Tribune.*)

“ The widow of Dr. Ayer, of Lowell, died recently in Paris. She was well known in that city as a person of great charitable kindness. Her home was in the Rue Constantine. Unfortunate artists and literary men, besides the poor of the masses, were materially helped by Mrs. Ayer’s American dollars. Three years ago her portrait, painted by Carolus Duran,

excited much praise. It was hung in the Champs de Mars Salon." (*The Independent*, New York.)

"The will of Mrs. Josephine M. Ayer has been presented for probate in Cambridge. It contains one bequest of local interest and one most munificent in character, namely, \$100,000 for the Ayer Home for Young Women and Children. This bequest easily excels all previous remembrances of Lowell institutions, and, in view of Mrs. Ayer's great generosity to the Home during her lifetime, makes her the foremost in the ranks of benefactors of the city's charities."—(*Lowell Courier*.)

"The death of Mrs. J. C. Ayer, who for so many years has been prominent in this city, brings sincere regret to both the French and American society. Her loss will be felt no less by the poor, who benefited by her lavish, but unostentatious, charity, than by those who had the many privileges of her immediate acquaintance.

"MARIE CHAMPNEY.

"PARIS, January 7, 1898."

At the annual meeting of the corporation of the Ayer Home for Young Women and Children, held January the eleventh, eighteen hundred and ninety-eight, the following resolutions upon the death of Mrs. Josephine M. Ayer were adopted by a rising vote :

“ The members of the corporation of the Ayer Home for Young Women and Children, assembled in their annual meeting, have received with deep regret the announcement of the death of Mrs. Ayer.

“ Her benevolent spirit, which responded so readily and so generously to Lowell's numerous charities, was especially munificent towards this institution which bears the name that she bore. The public know in part, what we know and appreciate fully, how largely it is due to her that the Ayer Home now occupies the Home which she so well adorned, that it has enjoyed such a measure of prosperity hitherto, and that it is able to shelter and protect so many who would otherwise be homeless.

“ Our name perpetuates the memory of her

generosity and that of her children, but we, as members of this corporation, desire to record our very deep sense of our obligation to her and of the personal loss that we have experienced in her death.

“We direct that this brief but sincere expression of our appreciation of her interest in the Home and her unfailing generosity towards it, be perpetuated upon the records of the corporation, and that the clerk be requested to transmit a copy thereof to the family with our heartfelt condolences with them in their bereavement.

“MARY A. WEBSTER,

*“Clerk of the Corporation of
the Ayer Home for Young
Women and Children.”*



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